

ruling, the Court made clear that right is not unlimited.

We do not, as Justice Scalia put it, have an unlimited right to keep and carry any weapon whatsoever in any manner whatsoever, for whatever purpose. Our individual right to bear arms is limited by our right, among others, to keep our children safe.

Any of those children could have been one of ours, and for 20 parents, it was.

We may not be able to stop every crime. We know that no single law or set of laws can prevent every act of senseless violence in our society, but we have the ability and the know-how to prevent many of them. We must simply find the courage.

We can no longer be bystanders to injustice. We cannot continue to look on and do nothing.

As Shakespeare said, “The fault, dear Brutus, lies not in our stars but in ourselves.”

We must act.

#### THIS HAS TO END

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) for 5 minutes.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Madam Speaker, the Bible says that by their deeds ye shall know them, and this Congress should pay heed to that message.

This week, we're mourning 20 children buried in Newtown, Connecticut. The President is right when he says we've seen this too many times before, and it has to end.

About this time 24 years ago I was sworn into the Congress. Two weeks later, five children were killed and 29 were wounded in the Stockton, California, schoolyard at Cleveland Elementary School.

You would have thought that we would have acted. Bills were put in. It took us until 1993—4 years—to pass the assault weapon ban. Courageous legislators stood up and said enough is enough, but hearings and all went on and on and on about military-style weapons that should be banned.

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Anybody knows you don't hunt with a banana clip with 30 bullets in it. That's not hunting. That's not what you use at a gun range. We know that we shouldn't be able to buy a gun if you have a record of serious mental illness. You would think those things that were common sense would become law.

They became law in 1993, and there was a pushback from the National Rifle Association that said, well, all right, you can pass this, but with a 10-year sunset on it. Why do you put a sunset on an assault weapon ban? But we did. The fight was led by a courageous lawmaker who was willing to stand up and take the chance of having the NRA come down on him. His name is PETE STARK. PETE STARK led the fight in the

House. DIANNE FEINSTEIN led the fight in the Senate. He pushed and pushed and pushed and put the bill in again and again and again and finally got it through. In a few days, he will cast his last vote in the House. I'm going to miss him. We need courageous legislators like that. What we didn't have 10 years later were courageous legislators.

When the ban came to an end in 2004, the House was in different hands, politics had changed, 9/11 happened, and everybody said, What's the problem, we don't need this ban anymore. It's very clear that there are some things we can do—things like the weapon ban—but the real difficult part for us is to have a discussion about violence in our society.

One of my old friends in Afghanistan told me you can tell a country by what its national game is. Ours used to be baseball. But it's hard to believe that baseball is our national game anymore when you look at Sunday Night Football and realize how we glorify violence. Go into a game store and look at the games that we buy for our kids at Christmas—games that make it possible for you to sit and kill people hour after hour after hour, sitting alone by a computer.

We don't want to talk about those issues. We've managed to get some of the violence on television down before 8 o'clock at night when kids are still up, but we struggle because in a free enterprise society you can do anything you want. Well, we run the risk of having the difficulties we have here today.

The other thing we have to think about is the whole question of how we deal with the mentally ill. In 1996, the Lanterman-Petris-Short Act passed in California. It made it almost impossible to put anybody in a locked facility unless they were imminently going to kill somebody or kill themselves. “Gravely disabled” was the term. We made it very hard to deal with these kinds of cases, and privacy rules and all of this we've added on over time has made it even more difficult. But it is clear that we as a society have to face the fact that there are some people who need help. This mother was looking for it.

We must act in this House.

#### TRAGEDY WITH NO POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DOLD) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DOLD. Madam Speaker, the tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut, highlights an issue. And I think so often in this Chamber, actually, we talk about things that separate us, things that we have political battles and fights over. Unfortunately, on Friday, a tragedy occurred in Connecticut, taking the lives of far too many—20 children—and is a tragedy that knows no political boundaries. These are children that had their entire lives in front of them.

On Friday, like many of us here, we were back at home in our districts. After hearing the news, many of us went to our schools to pick up our children to hug them just a little bit longer.

This is a tragedy, Madam Speaker; and, frankly, it highlights a number of issues that many of us have talked about on the floor today: it's about the mentally ill; it's about what we can do as a country to make sure that, yes, we have a Second Amendment. And many of us here even in this Chamber, Madam Speaker, are gun owners. But I do believe that we are all for responsible gun ownership. And I do believe that there are reasonable restrictions that can be put in place.

But today, Madam Speaker, it's not about that for us. Today, I rise because America is hurting. The country is looking for answers—answers that I'm not so sure will come immediately. As we look at the pictures of these first-graders, of these kindergartners, we ask, Why? Those answers won't come today. Those answers might not come next week. What we do know is that our job, our basic function, is to make sure that we try to provide an environment throughout our country where people can achieve their dreams. That ought to be something that, again, is not a Republican idea or a Democrat idea. That's an American ideal and the American Dream.

A very sick individual robbed 20 children and six adults of their American Dream. I would like to think that they're in a better place today. I take some solace in my faith that I don't understand the Grand Plan and that the good Lord does. But what I will say is that we all believe that this was a senseless killing and tragedy. I hope we can learn from it.

I hope those in Newtown, Connecticut, feel the warmth of the Nation that is sending their thoughts and prayers to them this day, especially as we look forward to the holidays in front of us. We will all say a special prayer for those that have been lost so needlessly in this act. I hope our country can come together. I hope we can focus on the American Dream and the opportunity for all children and all Americans going forward.

#### FISCAL CLIFF NEGOTIATIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFazio) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFazio. As I speak on the floor today, the Republicans are in conference with Speaker BOEHNER, talking about and getting an update on the so-called “fiscal cliff” negotiations. There seems to have been some progress.

A number of us are opposed to the idea of reducing further the already inadequate COLA granted to seniors on Social Security, but in some other areas there does seem to have been some meaningful progress. I was particularly pleased to hear that the